

## Appendix F: State Collaborations Supporting Parental Involvement

The State of Tennessee Department of Education collaborates with many local and federally-funded projects utilizing technology for both publicity and training to increase parental involvement within their programs. Although statewide in scope, each collaboration has a specific purpose and focus for its individual project sites. Working with multiple socio-economic groups, all collaborations have a similar mission to fully integrate parents into their children's lives and learning. The use of technology to accomplish this task is vital to their success.

### *Smart from the Start*

Smart from the Start is a program utilized by the Department of Education, in conjunction with several corporate sponsors, to prepare a flipchart which provides information for parents regarding milestones in their child's developmental growth. Technologically-generated calendars are distributed to each new parent upon their release from the hospital and a current website is maintained for online links and resources.



### *Head Start*

Head Start is a federally-funded collaborative program between Tennessee state government and twenty-two agencies providing Head Start services to children in Tennessee. The statewide collaboration office and personnel are housed within the Department of Education and offer technical assistance to Directors and mid-managers in each county. Tennessee hosts projects (one or more sites in each county) which require significant parental involvement during family participation in the local program. In addition to the methods listed for all state collaborations, Head Start sites use technology to inform and increasingly involve parents by: 1) creating awareness of current federal legislation that may affect their resources, such as: a) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)-offered through the Department of Human Services, b) child care and c) Women, Infants and Children (WIC)-offered through the Department of Health; 2) promoting local and regional conferences for parents; 3) offering training in the *Be Smart Kids* computer-based literacy program used by their children onsite and 4) designing and providing a printed copy of the *Smart from the Start* flipchart used by home visitors and available for download on their website.<sup>1</sup> Email is utilized extensively throughout the program to report successes and challenges to the Collaboration office and a national network is available for support and encouragement. Head Start projects serve diverse families from all cultures with Early Head Start (children from birth to age three) and Head Start (children three to five years of age).<sup>2</sup>



### *Early Childhood Education Centers*

Our state-funded preschools, or Early Childhood Education Centers (ECEs), use technology to solicit parental information and to promote involvement in their child's education. Parents receive an electronic survey in both Spanish and English via email. If parents cannot access this information at home, each site allows parents to use this service onsite or download a hard copy

<sup>1</sup> *Smart from the Start* flipchart available for download at <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/smart>

<sup>2</sup> Head Start website: <http://www.tnheadstart.org/>

to complete, if preferred. Parents also have the option of downloading individual sheets of the Smart from the Start information to take home. These sites also promote parental involvement using flyers and brochures by inviting them to a Parent Night. During these sessions, parents are invited into the classroom to “do what their child does” and work on the computer using emergent or literacy software. Gaining this technology literacy is a great incentive to most of these parents and allows them to become even more involved in their child’s education.

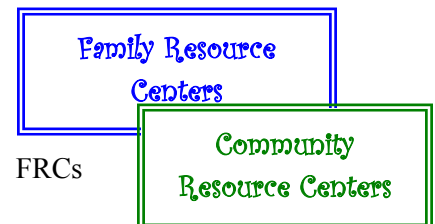
### *Even Start*

The Tennessee Department of Education currently oversees twenty-eight Even Start programs throughout the state. Parents whose families participate in the program agree to spend at least twenty hours a week at the project site working with their children and assisting with the program. Scheduling this amount of time for many parents is challenging. In alignment with one of the main goals of this project, Even Start programs use computers in many Parent And Child Together (PACT) time activities in which the parent and child engage in word and number games, story reading and other literacy and pre-literacy pursuits. One exemplary site utilizing technology for parental involvement is home-based and Tennessee has provided each participating family with a computer for use within their own home. Virtually all of these computers have been acquired through state surplus and are used for PACT activities, as well as adult education lessons and early childhood learning activities. To increase parental involvement and economic self-sufficiency at all sites, parents are also offered ABE, GED or vocational programs that include computer training, as well as essential life skills, such as budgeting, food preparation, résumé writing and job interview skills. Technology plays a number of significant roles as Even Start projects work with families on their Individual (IP) and Family Plans (FP) and goals, as required by the program. An individual’s status and progress in all four ES components, including parenting education and PACT participation, is tracked on a Tennessee web-based data collection system, created in collaboration with the Systems Development Institute, UT and the University of Tennessee Center for Literacy Studies. Even Start sites work with families in high poverty areas involving children from birth to age eight.<sup>3</sup>



### *Resource Centers*

Family or Community Resource Centers throughout the state are monitored by the Department of Education. Although no longer funded through a Federal grant, many of these centers have become an integral part of the community and are being sustained with local funds. FRCs or CRCs are located in many subsidized housing communities and were originally funded to bring local resources together under one roof so families in temporary or extended need could more efficiently and effectively utilize these resources. Technology is used not only for reporting purposes, but also to help parents, caregivers and students receive the help they need to become productive citizens of their community. Participants are instructed on obtaining correct credentials and necessary reading skills for receiving a driver’s license, utility services, completing routine school forms for their children, résumé writing and job interview skills, all accomplished with the aid of technology in both the promotion of the activities and the activities themselves. One example of effective collaboration is the increased parental involvement inherent in UT Agricultural Services allowing the FRC/CRC parents to use the University computer bank to locate recipes for healthy, affordable



<sup>3</sup> Even Start website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/sp/spevenstarhome.htm>

foods for their families. Flyers encouraging local donations of food, clothing, furniture, books and toys are also solicited by local staff and items are advertised throughout the neighborhoods as being available onsite. Families use these centers as a “one stop” community resource where caring, educated individuals offer classes and training on the life skills they need.

## ORDIS

A state-funded project using technology to increase the involvement of parents and caregivers is known as ORDIS. These six One-Room Drop-In Schools are located in major metropolitan areas: two each in Nashville and Memphis, and one each in Chattanooga and Kingsport. As family-oriented learning centers located in public housing projects, each provides a licensed teacher, computer technology, and other academic and community resources for 11 months a year. All of the ORDIS programs include:



1. after-school and summer homework help and enrichment for children in kindergarten through grade 12;
2. Adult Literacy/Basic Education and GED preparation for adults and school drop-outs; and
3. drug and alcohol abuse prevention/education.

Each ORDIS program is unique, created in response to specific needs of the community and individuals it serves, but all offer access to technology during normal and atypical hours to increase involvement of both parents and children. These academic resource centers provide services to all community members, so many grandparents and caregivers participate as well. The ORDIS program serves between 2,000 and 3,000 individuals each year, from birth to age 60+.<sup>4</sup>

## 21st Century Community Learning Centers



The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Centers have two major benefits to their clientele. They are located within a neighborhood school or facility and stay open during atypical hours. This allows parents with daytime or part-time jobs to schedule needed classes and workshops around their working schedules. Transportation for participants is also often included to facilitate participation by families in outlying areas with no transportation of their own. These programs give priority to communities serving students attending schools that have been identified for improvement.

In addition to the generic uses of technology within these collaborations, the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC offers:

- Technology programs and telecommunications provided to students and their adult family members
- Remedial education and limited English proficient classes which utilize technology as an incentive for involvement
- Expanded library hours
- Parent involvement & family literacy activities<sup>5</sup>

## Character Education and Safe and Drug-Free Schools

To comply with state legislation, each school must include character education in their curriculum. Safe and Drug-Free Schools programs are generated through



<sup>4</sup> ORDIS website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/sp/ordis.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/sp/sp21stcentury/index.htm>

Title IV, Part A funds. Both programs are overseen by the Department of Education and technologically-generated items are used both to inform and increase parental involvement in each of these endeavors. Students are provided opportunity and example for becoming conscientious and productive citizens in their school, community and nation. Since technology in all forms has become such a vital tool for students and parents alike, by incorporating these concepts in relation to Internet safety and copyright procedures in and out of the classroom, parents are increasingly involved in their child's activities and actions. Websites, flyers, brochures, letters and phone calls are used to promote these sessions and advanced technology is involved in the presentations as well. Records show that increasing numbers of parents are becoming involved in the school-based activities that inform and make them more aware of the habits, trends, and activities associated with the "wrong crowd". By implementing character traits like caring, respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, citizenship and fairness into all areas of the school experience, students will gain better self-awareness and the desire to become more socially responsible. Safe and Drug-Free Schools will also result. <sup>6</sup>



### *Family Literacy Statewide Consortium*

In January 2000 Tennessee was awarded a federal grant to promote the contributions of Family Literacy to the educational, social, and physical development of children, the stability of families and communities, and the development of a competent workforce. In January, 2004 the State Department of Education will also ask the State Board to include Family Literacy as one of the planks in their platform for Education Initiatives.



Backed by a Federal grant, experts from a wide array of programs and services in Tennessee formed the Statewide Family Literacy Consortium.

Agencies represented in the Consortium include several departments of our state government plus institutions of higher education, Head Start, county and city education agencies, non-profit community-based organizations, philanthropic organizations, and individuals interested in family-friendly programs.

Technology is used extensively to increase involvement from all is interested parties, including the parents and community resources within local communities. Activities, schedules, legislation affecting the LEAs and awareness of these issues are promoted using technology of all types.

The Consortium believes that citizens must use whatever means necessary to increase literacy (basic reading and writing skills leading to economic self-sufficiency) for all Tennesseans. Technology plays a vital role in this mission and is used throughout their recruitment and program elements to involve more adults in this goal. <sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Character Education website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/sp/spcharactered/index.htm>

Safe and Drug-Free Schools website: <http://www.tennessee.gov/education/sp/sp-drugs.htm>

<sup>7</sup> Statewide Family Literacy Consortium website: <http://cls.coe.utk.edu/tnfamilit/>